

Coaches' Corner

TAKE TWO: on the Certified Coach discussion

Question:

My riding coach has moved from the barn where I keep my horse. The barn owners have brought in another coach, but he's not Equine Canada certified. The owners say he's a good coach and it doesn't matter, but I would like to know why the previous owners put such importance on the certification of my coach. I want to get the best teaching that I can. ➡

Do you have a question for a coach? Or an expert horseperson? Training issues, tack purchase and care, horse management, feed and everything else that goes into working with, and looking after a horse. Write your question to 'Coaches Corner', Suite 203, 23-845 Dakota Street, Winnipeg, MB. R2M 5M3 or email editor@horsecountry.ca. We have a range of coaches and experts to answer your questions.

➡ *Sandy Assman from Saskatchewan answered this question in the last issue from the viewpoint of an Equine Canada coach. However there is another certification program with a large number of coaches in Canada: that of the Certified Horsemanship Association. Tara Reimer, (Swynar Tack Shop and Cloud 9 Ranch) is a CHA certified coach and gives us an alternative option.*

Answer:

Tara says, "My response would be that certification indicates that the coach takes their responsibility seriously by investing their own money and energy into meeting industry standards, improving their own skills and educating themselves.

Certified instructors take on the responsibility of being accountable to both the certifying association and the student. There are very good instructors who are not certified. However there will be more trial and error to discover how capable those people are at instructing and if there is a problem with a coach who is not certified, there is no "higher up" to go to. As a certified coach/instructor, I believe that students should use ONLY certified instructors. The equestrian sport is unique because it involves two living beings with their own minds and own bodies. Because of the safety factor, instruction by anyone not certified greatly increases your safety risks.

CHA has developed a highly lauded certification process for arena instructors, trail guides, instructors of riders with disabilities and seasonal equestrian staff. Instructors are evaluated in five areas: safety, horsemanship knowledge and ability, teaching technique, group control, and responsibility and professionalism. CHA's certification process has been continually monitored and refined for more than 30 years, in order to meet the needs of a changing horse industry.

Certification is a validation of the individual's knowledge and ability, and demonstrates to employers and customers that the instructor has been proven against a respected standard, under independent evaluation. Certification means the instructor is committed to professional standards and is proven to be safe, knowledgeable and effective.

The CHA certification process involves evaluation by two CHA certified clinicians, in a 5-7 day certification clinic. CHA certification clinics involve teaching at least four practice lessons, a riding evaluation, a written test and participation in workshops on risk management, teaching techniques, professionalism and herd management. Certification is awarded at the end of the clinic and the level

of certification attained (if any) is the sole discretion of the two CHA Clinicians conducting the clinic. Certification is valid for three years from the certification date; the instructor must maintain annual individual membership in CHA. Instructors may recertify at the end of the three-year certification period by providing documentation of at least 25 hours of continuing education and work within the industry.

Tara adds, "I completed both Equine Canada Western Level 1 and CHA because EC certifies coaches of individual students and CHA certifies group instructors. I wanted to be proficient in both. Both EC and CHA instruct English and Western. In my opinion, EC focuses on developing future Olympians, having strict testing and very high riding standards, including horse show experiences. CHA focuses on providing solid instruction, starting at the first time rider, emphasizing safety and fun, and building on that to develop solid everyday riders

At my facility, I incorporate both certifications by starting beginner students on the CHA program where they can complete one level in 6-8 weeks. Once three of the four CHA levels are complete I move into EC levels where it takes 12+ weeks to complete a level. For those students who ride for only one summer, CHA enables them to complete a level. It is gratifying for students to know they completed a level that is valid anywhere in the CHA program." ♦

Tara Reimer has 20+ years of experience teaching students, training horses, judging, conducting clinics and showing competitively. A past 4-H member and leader she is also an Equine Canada Level 1 Western Coach, EC General Performance Judge, Certified Horsemanship Association Clinic Instructor and AQHA Professional Horseman. She teaches group and private lessons for beginner to advanced children up to adults in both western and English. Her most current accomplishments include AQHA Championships by both her student's and her own horses. Her motto at Cloud 9 Ranch is "All for the sake of the horse."

A CHA Certification course is being held in Manitoba April 13 -18, 2007. See advertisement on page 64.
BONUS: Another Coaches' Corner on page 36!